Christian Zionism: Prophecy of God or Prophecy Self-Fulfilled?

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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

"Christian Zionism: Prophecy of God or Prophecy Self-Fulfilled?"

written by

Brooke Baker

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion of the Carl Goodson Honors Program meets the criteria for acceptance and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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Christian Zionism
Prophecy of God or Prophecy Self-Fulfilled?

AN HONORS SENIOR THESIS

By
Brooke Baker

Thesis Director: Dr. Kevin C. Motl
Second Reader: Dr. Eric Goddard
Third Reader: Dr. Steven Thomason

Spring 2011
Since its creation in 1948, Israel has received criticism from around the world for its policies toward the Palestinians. However, there is one nation that has seemed to stand beside Israel consistently and unconditionally throughout its short lifetime: The United States of America. Support for Israel among American citizens is staggering. According to a 2010 Gallup poll, 63 percent of Americans sympathize more with the Israelis than with the Palestinians while 85 percent of Republicans do \cite{Saad}. We see this manifested in the political arena and in economic aid. As of 2005, the U.S. had provided Israel with nearly $154 billion in economic and military assistance \cite{Mearsheimer and Walt}. This overwhelming support for Israel in America is no coincidence. Christian Zionism has had a very strong foothold in America historically and it is this philosophy that gives Israel, perhaps, its greatest ally. According to a recent survey by Christianity Today, 24 percent of Americans believe ‘the biblical mandate for Christians is to support the State of Israel’ \cite{Sizer}. The current Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu wrote in 2006, “Thank God for Christian Zionists. Like it or not, the future of the relationship between Israel and the U.S. may very well hinge far less on America’s Jews than on its Christians” \cite{Mearsheimer and Walt}. Netanyahu’s words were telling, and they have incessantly been proven true to this day.

“Christian Zionism” in its most simple form simply means “Christian support for Zionism” or the return of the Jews to the land of Palestine \cite{Sizer}. Its roots lie at least as far back as the Protestant Reformation when a strictly literal interpretation of scripture emerged. This was partly due to the invention of the printing press and the translation of the Bible into the vernacular making scripture available to the laypeople for the first time. Although Reformation scholars such as John Calvin and Martin Luther understood “Israel” in the New Testament to
universities were founded during this time period with Christian Zionism being one of their foremost values. These include Biola and Northwestern Bible Training School of Minneapolis (Sizer 67-80).

World War II and the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust brought with it mass migrations of European Jews to Palestine culminating in 1948 when Israel declared its independence (Sachar 187). For many Christians, this was seen as the fulfillment of prophecy that had been forthcoming for centuries. However, it also marked the beginning of a struggle in which Christian Zionists would increasingly have to justify Israel’s actions toward the Palestinians. Immediately after independence was declared, Israel began systematically “cleansing” the land and Palestinians were forced from their homes. “Of about 807 registered Palestinian villages in 1945, only 433 were still standing by 1967. Put bluntly, 45% of the Palestinian villages were emptied and demolished as a result of the creation of the state of Israel” (Burge 44).

This was only the beginning of a history of violence that Israel and Palestine would come to know. 1967 brought about the “Six Day War” in which Israel’s impressive victory would deepen Christian Zionists’ convictions. In 1987 the first “Intifada” or uprising occurred, in 1990 the Gulf War broke out, the second Intifada began in 2000, and smaller battles and street violence have persisted almost unceasingly to this day (Carter 4-7). What makes this land so important for some Christians and what are the reasons they give for this importance?

The foundation of Christian Zionism rests on a number of specific interpretations of Biblical Prophecy and beliefs regarding the end times. If these interpretations prove to be invalid, the entire basis of Christian Zionism is compromised.
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The foundation of Christian Zionism rests on a number of specific interpretations of Biblical Prophecy and beliefs regarding the end times. If these interpretations prove to be invalid, the entire basis of Christian Zionism is compromised.
There are three major eschatologies or understandings of the end of times according to Christian Theology. These include amillennialism, postmillennialism, and premillennialism. The millennium refers to the one thousand year reign (either literal or figurative) of Jesus Christ on earth where peace and goodness prevail (Ryrie 63).

Amillennialists do not believe in a literal reign of Christ on earth. Rather, they maintain that the millennium refers to the reign of Christ in heaven over the Christians who have already died. They believe that the end-time events including the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment and the eternal state will all “occur in rapid succession ruling out an earthly millennial kingdom” (Hays, Duvall and Pate 24). Of note, amillennialists do not take the Bible as literally as do premillennialists. Therefore, they hold to the belief that the Old Testament promises made to Israel have been fulfilled in the church. Amillennialism is appealing to many due to its simplicity. However, it is criticized for its inconsistency in dealing with Revelation 20:1-10 (Hays, Duvall and Pate 24-26). In order to fit its belief of a symbolic reign of Christ on earth, it interprets the Greek verb for “come to life” as figurative in the first context when talking about the thousand year reign, and literal only a few verses later (Wilson 100). This inconsistency is large enough to cause many to dismiss this viewpoint altogether (Hays, Duvall and Pate 26).

Postmillennialism was at one point the dominant view of the end times. It contends that Jesus will return after the era of the millennium (generally not considered literal) in glory to judge all of mankind. Postmillennialism is based on the concept of progress and the expectation that the gospel will triumph and reach all the nations of the world only after which Jesus will return (Hays, Duvall and Pate 334-335). It is, therefore, a very optimistic viewpoint and gives its adherents hope of success in evangelization and improvement in the world and a motivation to ceaselessly spread the gospel message. However, many criticize this view as unrealistic.
Furthermore, it ignores many passages in the New Testament that seem to predict intense trials and persecutions for the followers of Jesus. It also minimizes the need for the hope of Christ's return. For example, Romans 8:23-24 states, "...but we ourselves... groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved." Additionally, postmillennialists all but ignore the crucial passage of Revelation 20 in its mention of the two resurrections (Hays, Duvall and Pate 336).

The final and most prominent view of the end times, premillennialism, is also the most complex. It is divided into two major groups: dispensational premillennialism and historic premillennialism. Moreover, dispensational premillennialism is further divided into classical dispensationalism and progressive dispensationalism (Hays, Duvall and Pate 341-343).

Premillennialism in its most basic sense simply holds to the belief that Christ will return before the millennium (Hays, Duvall and Pate 341). Classical dispensational premillennialism (or simply dispensationalism for short) is necessarily the viewpoint held by Christian Zionists and has gained a noteworthy following in America and around the world.

Dispensationalism derives its name from the belief that God has worked with humans throughout history using a series of dispensations or events (Ryrie 22). The origins of this eschatology seem to date no earlier than the nineteenth century when it was first articulated by John Nelson Darby. It was then spread to the United States with the help of the Scofield Reference Bible and was later popularized by Hal Lindsey's The Late Great Planet Earth and Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkin's Left Behind series (Hays, Duvall and Pate 117). The most important aspect of dispensationalism is its strictly literal hermeneutic or interpretation of scripture (Ryrie 20). This includes the book of Revelation. Therefore, dispensationalists tend to
ignore the immediate context in which Revelation was revealed and prefer applying futurist readings. This has led to many outrageous claims regarding current events and their indications of the end of times. Hal Lindsey was a pioneer of sorts in this field with his 1970 publication of *The Late Great Planet Earth*. We can now see in light of this literal and futurist interpretation of scripture the motivations behind Christian Zionism. The strictly literal approach leaves no room for the church to fulfill the promises made to Israel (*Hays, Duvall and Pate* 118-119). Dispensationalists make a strong distinction between Israel and the church. *Israel* always means ethnic Israel and they alone are the special chosen people of God and are generally seen to hold a higher status than the church (*Ryrie* 137-140). The church is considered merely a “parenthesis” in God’s plan, “coming to existence [only] after Israel rejected the kingdom” (*Hays, Duvall and Pate* 118). After the “time of the Gentiles” is fulfilled, Israel will be made jealous and will be offered the kingdom again (*Ryrie* 135-137). Herein lies the importance of the restoration of ethnic Israel and the perceived value of the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Ethnic Israel must obtain its Old Testament promises in full, including the land, before Christ can return. This leads Christian Zionists to attempt to hasten the end of times by supporting the modern state of Israel, facilitating “aliyah” or the restoration of the scattered Jews to Israel, supporting “Eretz Israel” or greater Israel “extending from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates” by encouraging illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, supporting an undivided capital of Jerusalem, and rebuilding the temple so that sacrifices can be reinstituted and so that it can be desecrated by the antichrist as prophesied in Revelation (*Sizer* 252). It is no wonder that peace with the Palestinians is not exactly a high priority. Once all of these things have been accomplished, the rapture will occur during which all Christians will be taken up to heaven leaving the disbelievers to deal with the tribulation. It will be during this time, they believe, that
the Jews will become Christians and Christ will return a second time for the judgment, millennium, and eternal state (Hays, Duvall and Pate 119).

While dispensationalism is admirable in the high regard with which it holds the Bible, its weaknesses far outnumber its strengths. It virtually ignores New Testament passages in which the church is described as being the fulfillment of ethnic Israel. Also, the expectation of two second comings of Christ, the rapture and judgment, has no scriptural support (Hays, Duvall and Pate 119). Finally, we must note the ridiculous conclusions that must be drawn if the entire Bible, particularly the book of Revelation, is read from a solely literal and futurist hermeneutic. Yet in spite of these inconsistencies, dispensationalism still has enough adherents to make a dramatic impact on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and, consequently, on the entire socio-political structure of the Middle East.

Progressive dispensationalism is a more recent movement begun in the late twentieth century in an attempt to revise classical dispensationalism by taking a less literal approach. This means drawing less of a distinction between the church and Israel. However, because literalism is the central trait of classical dispensationalism, many classicalists do not consider progressives to be dispensationalists at all (Hays, Duvall and Pate 120-121).

The final view of the end times, historic premillennialism, is also the most theologically sound. Like dispensationalism, it maintains that Christ will return before the millennium. However, instead of insisting on a strictly literal interpretation of the Bible, it takes into account each text's historical and literary contexts, structure, and grammar (Hays, Duvall and Pate 342). Furthermore, when dealing with Revelation, it combines preterist (taking into account the text's immediate context), idealist (symbolizing the battle between good and evil) (Wilson 43) and
futurist views rather than simply using the futurist view as do dispensationalists. Because it is free from strictly literal interpretations, historic premillennialism does not draw a sharp distinction between Israel and the church. Rather, it contends that the church is the fulfillment of Israel and inherits the promises made to Old Testament Israel. It is believed that many Jews may still convert at the end of times, but the nation of Israel itself has no unique role left in God’s plan (Hays, Duvall and Pate 342).

Historic premillennialism is post-tribulational, meaning Jesus will return after the tribulation and Christians will be present. This negates the need for two advents or second comings of Jesus. In addition, historic premillennialism interprets Revelation 20 to mean two physical resurrections which escapes the difficulty of dual interpretation of the same verb presented to amillennialists. Finally, it can also be argued that this viewpoint has the strongest support from early Christianity claiming church fathers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Lactantius (Hays, Duvall and Pate 342-343). When given the framework of these theological basics, it is easier to understand the case for Christian Zionism. It is also easier to refute it.

The spokesmen for Christian Zionism are many. However, their arguments generally are the same. One will find that most of the arguments for Christian Zionism can be refuted based on their dependency on a classical dispensationalist eschatology and the others by recognizing a few historical or logical facts. These arguments and the basic beliefs from which they stem include, but are not limited to, the following.

1. The Abrahamic Covenant was unilateral, everlasting and unconditional.
God’s covenant with Abraham is presented in three major passages in the Old Testament: Genesis 12:1-7; 15:1-20; and 17:1-8 (Hays, Duvall and Pate 10). The covenant comprises of blessing Abraham, making him into a great nation and making his name great, blessing those who bless him and cursing those who curse him, blessing all of the peoples on earth through him, and finally, promising to give his descendants the land of Canaan (DeHann 17). One of the most serious manners in which a covenant was made during this time period involved splitting an animal in half and walking through it implying that this should happen to either participant should he break his side of the covenant. In Genesis 15:1-20, God walks though the split animals by Himself indicating that the covenant is unilateral, or one-sided. Only God is bound to it. Later on, in Genesis 17:7, God states that the covenant is to be everlasting (Hays, Duvall and Pate 10-11). Since this covenant is unilateral, Christian Zionists conclude that it must be unconditional, as well, in contrast with the Mosaic covenant in which God’s people were bound by the law. We see throughout the Old Testament that the promises given to Israel (or the descendents of Abraham) can be delayed due to disobedience but not permanently. Therefore, even if one generation sinned and was deprived of the covenant’s blessings, future generations would always have a new chance at receiving the promise (Hays, Duvall and Pate 12). Exodus demonstrates the Abrahamic covenant in action as Moses was sent to deliver the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. Pharaoh was cursed and God’s people were returned to the land of Canaan (Hays, Duvall and Pate 13). We see it further as Joshua conquers the land against all odds. Because this covenant was said to be everlasting and is dependent upon God’s faithfulness to man rather than man’s faithfulness to God, Christian Zionists argue that the advent of Jesus and the New Covenant cannot replace or abolish the Abrahamic covenant as it did the Mosaic. Therefore,
although many Jews did not accept Jesus as Messiah, they are still considered the blessed and chosen race and the land of Canaan is still believed to belong to them.

1. Counter-Argument

It is undeniable that the Abrahamic covenant was unilateral and everlasting. However, this does not necessarily mean that it was unconditional. On the contrary, we see many examples within the Old Testament of this conditionality. For example, Leviticus 18:24-30 says,

"Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the foreigners residing among you must not do any of these detestable things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. Everyone who does any of these detestable things—such persons must be cut off from their people. Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God." (Burge 73)

It is clear that living in the land was dependent upon faithfulness to God’s will. But how, then, can this covenant still be considered unilateral? The answer is that the promise was made to the seed of Abraham. However, when an individual left the path of Abraham and, consequently, the path of God, he was no longer considered to be Abraham’s true seed. We see this demonstrated in many passages throughout the Bible. For example, Romans 2:28-29 states, “A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart…” (Quest Study Bible
Then in Romans 9: 6-8 goes on to say, “It is not as though God’s word failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’ In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring” (Quest Study Bible 1620). Finally, Jesus himself says in John 8:39, “If you were Abraham’s children... then you would do the things Abraham did” (Quest Study Bible 1537).

We must also take into consideration the New Testament’s general outlook on the matter. In Galatians 3, Paul notes that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant in that through him, a descendent of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, “all the nations will be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). But interestingly, the New Testament without explanation completely drops the theme of the land that was so central to the Old Testament (Hays, Duvall and Pate 252). It seems that matters such as race, lineage, and land ownership had become trivial to followers of Jesus who found their new identities in faith and the eternal Kingdom of God. We can see one concrete example of this devaluation of land after the coming of Jesus in Acts 4:36-5:11 where Jewish Christians in Jerusalem are found selling their land in order to give the proceeds to the church; something that was never allowed throughout the Old Testament (Hays, Duvall and Pate 253). The book of Hebrews speaks loudly on this issue of land. Although Abraham entered the land of Canaan and received what was promised on the surface, Hebrews 11:9-16 says,

“By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God... All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the
things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth... Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." (LaRondelle 143) (Italics mine)

The writer of Hebrews explains that the promise was never really merely the land of Canaan. Rather, it was a symbol and a reminder of the promise that is to come for the people who follow God.

2. The Jews remain the primary, if not exclusive, chosen people of God.

If the Abrahamic covenant is unilateral and everlasting, Christian Zionists argue, then the Jews are and always will be the chosen people of God. Many times throughout the Old Testament, God says of the Hebrews, “I will be their God and they will be my people” (e.g. Ex. 6:6-7; 19:15; Lev. 26:9-14, Jer. 7:23; 30:22; Ezek. 11:19-20, etc.) (Hays, Duvall and Pate 329). These Jews are made up specifically of the descendents of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob (DeHann 18). Therefore, according to Christian Zionists, “choseness” is based primarily on race rather than faithfulness. Any attempt by Christians to equate the modern-day church with Israel is labeled as “Replacement Theology” and is strongly rebuked. Romans 11 is perhaps the most often quoted passage in refuting this theology. In the passage, Paul makes a clear distinction between “natural branches” and branches that have been “grafted in.” In doing so, he is showing the relationship between Jews and Gentile believers. The natural branches (the Jews) that rejected God were “broken off” which made it possible for new wild branches (the Gentiles) to be grafted in. But it goes on to say that the rejection of the Jews is not total nor is it permanent. The inclusion of the wild branches will, in fact, ultimately spur the natural branches on to
jealously and they will once again join the vine. This illustration makes it clear that there is still a future purpose for national Israel.

Romans 11:28-29 goes on to say, "Concerning the gospel they [the Jews] are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." (Brog 20) This not only confirms the everlasting nature of the Abrahamic covenant but also demonstrates the extent to which Jews hold a permanent place in the plan of God.

Dispensationalists make a clear distinction between “spiritual Israel” which includes the gentiles, and “national Israel” which includes ethnic Jews, regardless of belief. Both are considered seeds of Abraham but only “national Israel” is entitled to the promises of land through the Abrahamic covenant (Ryrie 149).

2. Counter-Argument

In order for a person to be considered a Jew ethnically, he or she must be a descendant of Abraham through the line of Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 21:12; 25:23) (DeHann 18). However, Jacob had twelve sons who were to make up the twelve tribes of Israel and the majority of these tribes were lost during Babylonian and Assyrian captivities (Chapman 116-119). Therefore, the remnant we have today is simply a portion of the likely numerous descendents of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob still living. Nevertheless, a true ethnic Jew must have an unbroken lineage of Judaism through the line of the mother. Therefore, if a person’s father is a Jew but the mother is not, he or she is not considered an ethnic Jew (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs).
Despite this fragile classification system, there still seem to be enough Jews claiming "pure" ancestry to make up the state of Israel and merit Christian Zionist support for doing so.

Romans 11: 28-29 does say that ethnic Israel is loved for the sake of their fathers. However, it also points out that if they have disbelieved, they are enemies for the sake of the gospel. The love they receive is merely a mercy from God because their fathers were righteous. But this merits them nothing in the way of their own righteousness.

Though the church does not seem to be synonymous with ethnic Israel, it does seem to take the place of Israel in all practical aspects in the New Testament. The various names for Israel used throughout the Old Testament are applied to the church in the New. These include "Israel," "a chosen people," "the true circumcision," "Abraham's seed," "the remnant," "the elect," "the flock," and "priesthood" (Hays, Duvall and Pate 330). The promises made to ethnic Israel were spiritualized and fulfilled in the church through Christ and the New Covenant (Hays, Duvall and Pate 330). In Galatians 3:16, Paul says that Christ is the ultimate seed of Abraham that fulfills the promise (Hays, Duvall and Pate 413). Therefore, all who believe are the true seed of Abraham "and heirs according to a promise," Galatians 3:29 (Chapman 154).

This theme is repeated frequently throughout the New Testament. Romans 10:12 states, "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him..." (Quest Study Bible 1622-1623) Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Quest Study Bible 1671). There is no discrimination in the New Testament. People are judged only according to faith and righteousness.
3. Jesus did not come for the Jewish people.

It is the view of at least one prominent Christian Zionist, John Hagee, pastor of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas with a membership of over 19,000 people complete with his own television show and founder of the enormous Christian Zionist organization Christians United for Israel (CUFI) which has become the largest pro-Israel organization in the United States, that Jesus never meant to be a messiah to the Jewish people (Christians United For Israel). In his not-so-subtle book entitled In Defense of Israel, he claims that the Jews never rejected Jesus. Rather, Jesus rejected them. Hagee quotes Luke 2:32 in which Jesus is described as being “a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles” (133). In doing so he is arguing that this was Jesus’ only purpose. Furthermore, he interprets Jesus’ refusal to give a sign of his being messiah as confirmation that he was not the messiah (136). Evidently, Hagee believes that the role of the Messiah was to bring about a literal kingdom on earth to the Jewish people and to restore to them their promised land.

3. Counter-Argument

This argument of Hagee’s is so ridiculous that it is hard to imagine that he is still one of the most influential and effective voices of Christian Zionism in the world today. The apostle Paul made it clear that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant (Galatians 3:16) (Quest Study Bible 1670-1671). It was simply not fulfilled in the way that the Jews were expecting. The Jews were anticipating a messiah to literally deliver them from bondage and renew their claim to the Promised Land. However, Jesus came to deliver them from a different type of bondage: bondage to the law. Moreover, since access to God was no longer limited to
the temple, the land itself lost its former significance. After the coming of Jesus, the new focus had become the Kingdom of Heaven (Hebrews 11:16) *(Quest Study Bible 1737)*.

Additionally, Hagee conveniently ignores key sections of the New Testament that utterly obliterate his claims. For example, in Matthew 15:21-28 Jesus is seen traveling from the region of Tyre and Sidon when a Canaanite woman approaches him begging him to heal her daughter who has been possessed by a demon. He ignores her until his disciples urge him to send her away. He finally tells her, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel... It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs” *(Quest Study Bible 1409)*. But he then goes on to help her due to her great faith. However, this story goes to show that Jesus made it abundantly clear that his mission was, in fact, to the Jews.

It seems that Hagee’s claim stems from little more than wishful thinking propagated by the conviction that the Jews are the blameless and unconditional people of God.

4. **There are two Biblical covenants alive today: Jewish and Gentile.**

The logical conclusion of the assertion that Jesus did not come for the Jews would be that there are two Biblical covenants alive today: one for the Jews to whom Jesus did not come and one for the gentiles to whom the New Covenant was brought. This is commonly referred to as the “Two-Covenant Theory” and is generally only propagated by extreme dispensationalists. The fundamental arguments for this theory are threefold. First, proponents of the theory argue that Romans 11 discusses the final salvation of the Jews without mentioning Jesus. Second, Paul’s letters are addressed only to the gentiles. And third, they argue, Paul criticizes the Jews only
because they have refused to recognize the gentile’s way to righteousness through Jesus rather than for rejecting Jesus themselves (Hays, Duvall and Pate 459).

Though this theory is considered to be among the more extreme views of dispensationalism, it is held by none other than the influential John Hagee. In the section of his book (previously mentioned) entitled “The Old Covenant is Not Dead,” Hagee does not seem to make a distinction between the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant, the latter of which involved the law. He uses arguments related to the everlasting nature of the Abrahamic covenant in an attempt to show that the Old Covenant (a term which is generally used in reference to the Mosaic covenant), and in essence the entire Old Testament, is still valid for Jews today. Clearly, for John Hagee evangelism of the Jews is not exactly a top priority. He emphatically states, “It is time for Christians everywhere to recognize that the nation of Israel will never convert to Christianity and join the Baptist church in their town” (Hagee 148).

4. Counter-Argument

The Two-Covenant Theory can “easily [be] refuted by Romans alone.” In Romans, Paul explains that only those who follow Christ can fulfill the law (8:1-11) and he laments that his fellow Jews have not accepted Christ (9:30-10:4) (Hays, Duvall and Pate 459). Romans 10:4 says, “Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Quest Study Bible 1622).

The departing of the presence of God from the temple in Jerusalem was a signal of the end of the Mosaic Covenant. Many of the Old Testament prophets including Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, prophesied the coming of a new Covenant in which God would write the law on
peoples' hearts and minds. It would be characterized by a close relationship with Him and the forgiveness of sin. Hebrews 8:13 specifically identifies the Old Covenant as "obsolete" and replaced by the better New Covenant brought by Christ (Hays, Duvall and Pate 304-305).

It seems that Hagee along with other extreme dispensationalists has conveniently ignored vast amounts of scripture, and perhaps the entire message of the gospel, in order to fit his preconceived notion of who the Jews are and where they fit in the larger picture of the Bible.

5. The "Church Age" or "Time of the Gentiles" is merely a "parenthesis" in God's major plan for the Jews.

This belief stems almost exclusively from Romans 11 where Paul discusses the purpose of the Gentile's conversion and the future salvation for national Israel. Romans 11:11, 25-26 says, "Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious... I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved" (Quest Study Bible 1624). When reading this passage by itself, it is easy to conclude that the salvation of the Gentiles was merely an afterthought only brought about in order to ultimately lead the Jews to salvation. They are pictured as a "rebound" of sorts meant to only make the true love of God, the Jews, jealous.

A second passage of scripture used in reference to the "times of the Gentiles" is Luke 21:24 which says, "...and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the
Gentiles be fulfilled" (DeHann 27). Christian Zionists interpret this to be an indication that national Israel will once again rule with the coming of Jesus at the millennium.

5. Counter-Argument

To claim that the only purpose of Gentile salvation was to make the Jews jealous diminishes the entire message of Christianity and the purpose of Jesus. We have already stated that Jesus was the true fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant in that through him, the world was blessed. His mission was not merely a side note in the grand scheme of the Bible. Rather, it was the entire purpose and climax of the Bible. The Old Testament repeatedly prophesied the coming of Jesus and a New Covenant.

It may be true that one consequence of the Gentiles attaining salvation and a relationship with God will be inciting jealousy among the Jews who were previously offered this type of relationship. However, it would be inconceivable for this to be the Gentiles' only worth and value in light of the rest of scripture.

6. God commanded all of mankind to “bless” His chosen people.

David Brog is among the more educated spokesmen for Christian Zionism today having graduated from Princeton University and Harvard Law School. He previously worked in the United States Senate for seven years and became chief of staff to Jewish senator Arlen Specter and staff director of the Senate Judiciary Committee. He has also served as an executive at America Online and practiced corporate law in Tel Aviv, Israel and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is now Executive Director of the Christian Zionist organization founded by John Hagee, Christians United for Israel (Christians United For Israel). But what makes Brog exceptionally
unique is the fact that he is not a Christian at all. He is a Jew (Brog back cover). But Christian Zionists seem to have no problem with this fact as he attempts to persuade the world of the "true" interpretation of scripture in which he obviously does not believe in order to further his own personal interests. I believe the common term for this would be "manipulation."

At any rate, in Brog's book, *Standing with Israel: Why Christians Support the Jewish State*, he identifies Genesis 12:3 as "Christian Zionism in a nutshell" (69). In this verse, God is declaring His covenant with Abraham. God tells him, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse..." (*Quest Study Bible* 18). This "you" is generally understood to mean the nation of Israel rather than Abraham himself and can, therefore, seem somewhat open-ended. It is not clear exactly what "blessing" entails or who exactly is eligible for said blessing. However, Brog shows how this short and simple verse has influenced countless Christian Zionists. Pat Robertson, founder of Fox Family Channel and host of *The 700 Club*, a far right-wing Christian television show, recounts that his mother drilled this verse into his head as a child and taught him that doing good to the Jewish people would merit God's blessing (Brog 69). Jerry Falwell rarely mentions Israel or the Jews without bringing up Genesis 12:3 (Brog 69). His conviction is so strong, in fact, that he once stated, "My political support for Israel is unconditional" (Brog 70). Christian Zionists are so passionate about the promise in this verse that they take advantage of every opportunity to "bless" the present-day Jewish race in any means necessary. Unfortunately, this most often translates into political support for the modern-day state of Israel.

6. **Counter-Argument**
Dr. Gary M. Burge is a professor of the New Testament at conservative Wheaton College (Burge back cover). He is also one of the loudest spokesmen and activists against Christian Zionism today. In his book, *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told about Israel and the Palestinians*, he analyzes Genesis 12:1-3 in-depth. The full passage reads:

“The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’" *(Quest Study Bible 18)*

It is first important to note that in this central passage of God's promise to Abraham, the land is not mentioned. This indicates that the most important aspect of the promise is that Abraham will be the father of a great nation and that they will be God’s people (Burge 69). The land is mentioned only later on in Genesis 15:18-21 and 17:7-9. Genesis 17:7-9 states,

“I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you, for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.” Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come.” *(Burge 70)*

While this does show that the land is to be a gift to the descendants of Abraham, the passage also makes it clear that the gift is inextricably linked to the other aspects of the covenant,
namely that God will be their Lord and all of the people of the earth will be blessed through them.

Burge points out three important things to note as the story of Abraham unfolds. First, as Abraham enters the promised land, the native residents are not kicked out. Abraham did not come as a conqueror. Rather, he became their neighbor. Furthermore, when his wife Sarah died (Gen. 23), he bought land in order to bury her. He did not assume that since God had given him the land that he could take claim to whatever he wanted. Second, Genesis 17 stresses the conditionality of the covenant. The promise is linked to obedience to God (Burge 71). And finally, he points out that Christians often take Genesis 12:3 out of context. Christian Zionists almost never quote the second half of verse three in which God tells the Jews that they are to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. The covenant is not meant to provide the Jews with unlimited and unconditional support in every aspect of life. Rather, “the covenant with Israel is God’s strategy to bring his goodness and righteousness to the rest of humanity. Israel is to be a nation of priests (Exod. 19:6; Deut.7:6), mediating God’s presence and goodness to the earth” (Burge 72). All of this lays in stark contrast to the practices of the present-day state of Israel.

Burge has not gone without criticism in his attempts to combat Christian Zionism. He has been labeled as an anti-Semite multiple times by members of his own university and was even contacted by the Jewish Anti-Defamation League in New York City asking him to clarify his viewpoints on Israel and scripture. They made it clear that criticism of Israel was not acceptable (Burge 269).

7. We owe it to the Jews to give them the land of Israel.
Christian Zionists argue that Jews are deserving of the land of Israel for three basic reasons. Firstly, Israel is a “democracy” and aligns with U.S. interests and ideals. Secondly, the West has a debt to the Jews due to both the religious and secular achievements they’ve made. And thirdly, they argue that we owe it to the Jews because of the many atrocities that were carried out against them in the past.

Many Zionists argue that Israel is the only true democracy in the Middle East today. In a speech given to a group of Zionists in Israel in 2004, Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network, described Israel as “an island of democracy, an island of individual freedom, an island of the rule of law, and an island of modernity in the midst of a sea of dictatorial regimes, the suppression of individual liberty, and a fanatical religion intent on returning to the feudalism of 8th century Arabia” (Robertson). John Hagee suggests that Arabs living in Israel have more freedom than they would have in any other country in the Middle East (Though, I think it’s safe to assume that in this instance he is not talking about the West Bank or the Gaza strip.) (Hagee 174).

The second claim is that mankind has a debt to the Jews in both the religious and secular spheres. Regarding the religious sphere, Hagee argues that “Christianity could not and would not exist if it were not for the Jewish people” (Hagee 91). He pronounces, “Jewish people gave us the scriptures... The Jewish people gave to Christianity the foundation of the Word of God. The Jewish people gave to us the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Jewish people gave to us the disciples. The Jewish people gave to us the apostle Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament” (Hagee 97-98). He also attributes the concepts of monotheism and a standard of right and wrong to the Jews (Hagee 102).
Hagee then goes on to demonstrate the Jewish contribution to society in the secular sphere. He asserts that "throughout history, Jews have been at the center of most of the world's creative, scientific, and cultural achievements" (Hagee 101). He attributes the values on which America was founded and the Declaration of Independence to the Jews in that they drew inspiration from the Bible which was given from the Jews (Hagee 103).

The final argument Christian Zionists make for why we owe it to the Jews to give them the land of Israel is also the most widely used. That is that the Jews deserve the land because of the atrocities that were perpetrated against them throughout the history of the world. John Hagee and David Brog hold the Christian church responsible for at least a large portion of these atrocities and, therefore, they argue it is Christians today who should help make up for them by supporting the Jews and their claim Promised Land. Hagee lists the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust as incidents for which Christians are responsible and have a duty to amend (Hagee 21-29). Brog argues that it was Christianity's history of anti-Semitism that eventually led to the Holocaust and, therefore, Christians have a responsibility to examine their views on the Jews' place in history and the plan of God and to make right the sins of their fathers by supporting Israel politically (Brog 29-38).

7. Counter-Argument

It may be true that the Middle East does not hold any true democracies, but to claim that Israel is such a democracy would be erroneous. David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, understood Israel's dilemma clearly. He knew that Israel wanted to be a democracy, a Jewish state, and the possessor of all of the Biblical land of Israel. But he realized that it would be impossible to be all of these three things at once. If Israel chose to be a democracy and a
Jewish state, it could not hold all of the land. If it chose to be a democracy and hold all of the land, it would be forced to represent the current Arabs living in the areas and would, therefore, cease to be Jewish. And finally, if Israel chose to be a Jewish state and hold of the historical land, it would forfeit its claim to being a democracy because Arabs living in the areas would be denied the right to citizenship and, hence, the rights entailed to members of a democracy (Burge 265).

This last choice is the one that the current state of Israel has chosen. It continues to occupy Palestinian territories and facilitate illegal settlements without giving the Palestinians voting rights, property rights, and basic human rights such as water, food and security. It is likely that the average Palestinian would laugh at the suggestion that he or she is freer in Israel than in any other Arab country. The number of refugees attests to that fact. Israel is no more a democracy than any other hypocritical government in the Middle East today.

Regarding the second claim that Jewish religious and secular achievements merit them the land of Israel, John Hagee's claims once again straddle ridiculousness and insanity. To assert that "Christianity could not and would not exist if it were not for the Jewish people" (Hagee 91) and that the "Jewish people gave us the scriptures" demonstrates a complete lack of understanding or respect for the manner in which God works. All credit for any salvation or guidance comes from God alone. This includes the guidance given to the Jews, themselves. God did not need the help or permission of the Jews to guide the Gentiles. God guides whomever He wills through whatever means He wills. Hagee's claiming otherwise makes one wonder where his true devotion lies. Furthermore, the fact that the Jews have made a disproportionate amount of secular achievements is inarguable. But how this gives them any sort of moral high ground or right to the land of Israel is beyond this writer's guess.
The final claim that Christians somehow owe the Jews the land of Israel due to the sins of their fathers is similarly ridiculous. Though, Jews do have a history of violence and discrimination against them and much of it has been done in the name of Christianity, this does not make it the fault of present-day Christians nor do they have an obligation to atone for their fathers’ sins. As Ezekiel 18:20 states, “The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him” (Quest Study Bible 1209).

Moreover, even if Western Christians did want to atone for the sins of their fathers by giving the Jews the land of Israel, the land would still not be theirs to give! The Palestinians have lived in the land for centuries and a few guilt-trodden Christians living on the other side of the world have no right to take their land and hand it over to someone else. But, unfortunately, it seems that all too often whenever the Holocaust card or its brother, the Anti-Semitism card is pulled, reason is thrown out the window and emotion takes over leading to a multitude of irrational decisions.

8. Islam is evil and the Palestinians/Muslims have no historical claims to the land.

In arguing for the legitimacy of the state of Israel, Christian Zionists often tend to demonize the “enemy” or in this case, the Palestinians. The focus of these attacks from Zionists is often Islam. John Hagee, of course, has much to say on the matter. In discussing Islam, he explains that Allah is not the same God that Christians and Jews worship and that His origins lie in the moon god that the Arabs worshiped in pre-Islamic Arabia. He says that Allah made a covenant with Abraham to give the Promised Land to the descendents of Ishmael rather than Isaac, that Muslims believe in a Messiah called the “Mahdi” who will come to conquer Israel. He then says, “Experts say that 15 to 20 percent of Muslims are radical enough to strap a bomb on
their bodies in order to kill Christians and Jews. That means there is an Islamic force of approximately three hundred million radicals who are willing to die killing you” (Hagee 69). He then goes on to explain that you cannot negotiate with these types of barbarians (Hagee 78).

Once Islam has been sufficiently slammed, Christian Zionists begin to argue for the Jewish historical right to the land and the illegitimacy of the Palestinian claim to the land. They claim that the Jews’ ancestors occupied the land as early as the twentieth century BC (Chapman 10) and that they were legally granted the land under the Balfour Declaration in 1917 by the British government (Chapman 57). Some then go so far as to argue that there is really no such thing as a “Palestinian” and that the land of Israel was completely vacant when Israel declared independence in 1948. John Hagee boldly claims,

“The land of Israel has never belonged to the Palestinians. Never!...There is no Palestinian language. Before 1948, the people now called Palestinians lived in Egypt. They lived in Syria. They lived in Iraq. They moved into the land of Israel when they were displaced by the war of 1948, which the Arab nations started, but Israel is not occupying territory these people now call home.” (Hagee 58)

8. Counter-Argument

In his claims regarding Islam, Hagee has managed to cite next to zero sources. That in itself lessens his credibility. However, in addition, most of his claims have absolutely no basis in fact. The word “Allah” simply means “the God” implying strict oneness and is related etymologically to the Hebrew words for God, “Eloi” or “Elohim” (Encyclopædia Britannica). It is in no way related to any type of moon god. Furthermore, Muslims do not believe that the promise of land was given to Ishmael rather than Isaac. Perhaps this was surmised by Hagee
since Arabs are believed to be the descendents of Ishmael. Finally, Muslims do believe in the coming of a Mahdi but they do not believe this to be the Messiah. Muslims believe, as Christians, that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied about in the Old Testament, though they do not believe that he was divine or the literal son of God. The statistic that Hagee gives stating that 15-20% of Muslims are willing to kill Christians and Jews in suicide missions is unfounded and, frankly, outrageous. Muslims have coexisted with Christians in the Middle East and throughout the world for centuries. If nearly one-fifth of Muslims wanted to kill Christians and Jews, surely there would be hardly any left. The truth is that Islam does not teach its adherents to kill those who disbelieve. In fact, Christians and Jews are considered “people of the book” and are, consequently, given a special respected status in Islam (The Holy Quran 29:46). Hagee’s aim is not to spread truth but to dehumanize and entire group of people so that there is less opposition to treating them like enemies. If someone believes that a people is barbaric and heartless, they will have no desire to negotiate or reason and, as a result, they will have no need to compromise their position.

As if this were not enough, Christian Zionists are inclined to completely overlook the vast amounts of Christian Arabs that have been living in the region for centuries. In June 2009, National Geographic featured an article entitled, “The Forgotten Faithful: Arab Christians” in which it charted the history of Christianity in the Middle East and the sudden recent exodus of large numbers of these Christians. Christianity, of course, began in Palestine first with the Jews and then with the conversion of the Gentiles. But who were these Gentile converts? It is plain that they were Palestinians. Christians fail to realize that there has likely been a continuous Arab Christian community living in Palestine and throughout the Eastern Mediterranean region for almost two thousand years. Even after the Muslims conquered the land in 638 CE, Christianity
remained the predominant religion. It was not until the Crusades when Christian Arabs were killed alongside of Muslims that Christianity began to decline (Belt 84). However, even to this day there are still an estimated 15 million Arab Christians living between Algeria and Iran (Burge 190). Of the worldwide Palestinian population, almost eight percent are Christians (Burge 191). However, Palestinian Christians have taken a very hard hit. Since 1894, the number of Palestinian and Israeli Arab Christians in Palestine has dropped from thirteen percent to less than two percent today (Belt 85).

Christian Zionism has made matters especially difficult for Christian Palestinians. What with the United States’ wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and strong U.S. support for Israel, to some Muslims it feels like a repeat of the Crusades and a war against Islam. Unfortunately, Christian Arabs are sometimes associated with Christians in the West and are therefore guilty “by association” (Belt 86). However, for the most part, Christian and Muslim Arabs get along as they have done for hundreds of years. After all, Christians are just as much victims of Israeli occupation and injustice as Muslims. One Christian Arab observes, “You can’t live alongside people for a thousand years and see them as the children of Satan... On the contrary, Muslims are us. This is the lesson that the West has yet to learn and that Arab Christians are uniquely qualified to teach. They are the last, vital link between the Christian West and the Arab Muslim world” (Belt 94).

One of Ouachita Baptist’s University’s own professors, Dr. Raouf Jamil Halaby is a first generation Palestinian Christian. I was fortunate enough to interview him concerning his experiences. Life was not easy as a Palestinian Christian. He and his family had a stateless status, no freedom of movement, their mail was censored, the phones were tapped, and they were not
even allowed to attend the public schools which were reserved exclusively for Jews. As long as no one knew they were Palestinians, they were safe. Halaby spoke fluent Hebrew using the Sabra dialect and could easily pass as a Jew. However, when people found out that they were Arabs, they were treated much differently. Growing up, his was the only Palestinian family in a Jewish neighborhood so they were “often the target of stone throwing and ostracism.” At one point they were raising rabbits in a field behind their house for food. They had to do it in secret because rabbits are not kosher. However, one of their neighbors found out and he set fire to the field. Fortunately, it was put out before it reached their house. As a child, he was the “Sabbath Goy” whose responsibility it was to do chores for the religious Jews on the Sabbath when they were prohibited from working. Many Israelis hated the Christians more than the Muslims because they were associated with the Christians of Germany and Europe. Often, as he and his family were walking to church on Sundays, Jewish boys would throw rocks at them screaming “Goyim, Goyim” meaning “Gentile, Gentile.” It was made quite clear that they were unwelcome.

I asked how the relationship was between Christians and Muslims in Palestine. He answered that although under occupation the British tried to sow division, Christians and Muslims “got along very well…Nationality was more important than religion.” His mother taught at an all-Muslim school in one of the Palestinian villages and she was very well respected.

Eventually, the social and political repression became too much and he and his family were forced to flee the country. He has since revisited on three separate occasions, all of which were horrible experiences. He was “strip searched, pulled out of the line, held up for close to four hours, questioned by different interrogation teams, and had every item searched thoroughly.”
Palestinians are indiscriminately discriminated against in Israel, regardless of their age, gender, religion, or status.

It is sad to note that in spite of all the suffering he and his fellow Arab Christians experienced in Palestine, it has not entirely ended since his immigration to America. During the last thirty-eight years that he has been associated with OBU, seven people in different settings have asked or charged him with being a terrorist. To conclude he adds,

“I would not have been as candid with my responses if I had not been here for 38 years, tenured, with senior faculty status. I even doubt that in today's anti-Muslim climate someone like me would be hired by OBU. I think most people have such a skewed view of the Near East, and some find it hard to believe that my family was Christian even before America was discovered. Christianity is not a Made-In-America brand as many make it to be. Its roots go to the Near East, and Christian Arabs were a major cornerstone in the formation of the Christianity -- something beyond most people's comprehension” (Halaby).

We see in his story the impact that Christian Zionism has on individuals' lives all throughout the world, including at home.

Finally, the claim that Palestinians have no historical claim to the land of Israel is simply untrue. Though the ancestors of the Jews lived in the land many years ago, this does not give them the right to take it back by force. The Palestinian Arabs did not move into the land in 1948 with the creation of the state of Israel as John Hagee claims. Israel was not a vacant wasteland for hundreds of years until the Jews miraculously discovered it. Palestinians have likely been living in the area for thousands of years. They are mainly the descendents of the Philistines,
Canaanites and Jebusites who were there when Joshua invaded the land in 1,500 B.C.E (Hadawi 17). Furthermore, while the Jews were being promised the land of Palestine by the British under the Balfour Declaration, the British were also promising the land to the Palestinians (Chapman 58-59).

9. The Book of Joshua condones the taking of the Promised Land by force.

In Israeli schools today, the Old Testament book of Joshua is required reading (Chapman 111). This is a scary thought if one realizes why this is mandated. Many Israelis and Christian Zionists believe that the book of Joshua can be used as a valid example for how Israel should be established and run today. The instructions given to Joshua in Deuteronomy 7:1-6 were the following:

“When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you— and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD’s anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.” (Burge 82-83)
It appears as though God is commanding genocide. When reading this, it would be easy for a young Jewish Israeli to assume the he or she has a very strong Biblical claim to the land of Israel, indeed, and that there are no limits to taking hold of that claim.

### 9. Counter-Argument

Three important observations are necessary with regards to such passages. First, Joshua 9:1-2 shows that the battles are targeted at coalitions of kings and urban areas with military strongholds rather than at the general population. Only three Canaanite cities are burned to the ground (Burge 83). The others are preserved (Chapman 112).

Second, the passages specifically emphasize the evil and poisonous nature of the Canaanite religion. This religion involved child sacrifices and cult prostitution and many scholars suggest that it had no moral grounds whatsoever. These people were not simply believers in God who were on the wrong path as were the people of Nineveh. They “had reached the depths of pagan depravity” (Burge 83).

And finally, Joshua never expels all of the Canaanites. In fact, he treats some of them, such as Rahab, with respect. Joshua 8:35 describes both the Jews and the foreigners among them as present during the renewing of their commitment to the covenant. This was after Joshua had entered the land (Burge 84).

We can see that Joshua’s conquest was more of the exception than the rule. It is certainly not applicable to the land of Israel today where the inhabitants are Christians and Muslims who both have a deep sense of morality and reverence for the God of Abraham (Burge 85).
10. The “signs of the times” prove that the modern state of Israel is the fulfillment of prophecy.

Since Christian Zionism and its father, dispensationalism, are inherently linked to a literal and futurist approach to scripture, Christian Zionists are constantly looking for signs of the “end times” as prophesied in the cryptic book of Revelation and elsewhere in the Bible. When looking, they all too often find, and in some cases, make sure that signs are found. In other words, they see what they want to see and when it’s not there, they often manipulate circumstances so that it appears.

Hal Lindsey is the king of interpreting modern-day events to signify the end of times. His book The Late Great Planet Earth published in 1970 makes numerous assertions regarding politics and events that supposedly fulfill scripture. In light of the cold war, he made out Russia to be Gog (59), aligned the pope with the antichrist (185) and predicted the imminence of World War III (146). He boldly predicts,

“…as the United States loses power, Western Europe will be forced to unite and become the standard-bearer of the western world. Look for the emergence of a ‘United States of Europe’ composed of ten inner member nations...It will stop the Communist take-over of the world and will for a short while control both Russia and Red China through the personal genius of the Antichrist who will become ruler of the European confederacy.”

(185)

Though these claims may seem ridiculous, at the time many Christians took them very seriously. But what is even more surprising is that, even when these events did not occur, Lindsey still continued writing and his audiences still continued listening! Seeing that his
predictions did not come true, he simply wrote new books with new predictions to fit the new political climate! These books include *The Final Battle* published in 1994 and *The Apocalypse Code* in published in 1997 (Sizer 95).

But the event which really drives these modern-day prophets and on which their material feeds was the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. John Hagee asks the question, "If God was indeed finished with the Jews and Israel...why did he allow that nation to be miraculously reborn?" (Hagee 150) The scattered Jews who had maintained their identity for thousands of years in spite of immersion in foreign cultures, had come together to form a new Nation in the land of their forefathers, revived a dead language and made it the official tongue of their country, and became an influential power in the global political arena in only a few years. Surely even a skeptic would marvel at these accomplishments.

10. Counter-Argument

Though the creation the state of Israel by the Jews was an unprecedented and impressive event in history, we must ask ourselves whether this seemingly miraculous event was the result of divine intervention or self-fulfilled prophecy. Christian Zionists and Jewish Zionists alike had been pushing for a Jewish homeland in Palestine for decades before it was actually accomplished. It is very possible that the widespread desire for the state ultimately led to its creation.

In order for the modern state of Israel to have been divinely ordained, it must correspond with Biblical Israel. A few observations will show us that this is not the case. In Biblical Israel, "aliens and sojourners" were given full freedoms and rights just as the Jews were. They were
allowed to join religious ceremonies and worship (Exod.:32:12; 12:48, Num.15:14, Josh.8:33), they were eligible for social assistance (Deut.24:19-21; 14:29; 26:12, Lev. 19:10; 23:27), and they were under the same system of justice (Num.35:15; 9:14, Josh.20:9, Deut.24:14; 1:16) (Burge 89-90). Even a superficial analysis of the present state of Israel will reveal that it not only offers none of these privileges but, in fact, denies its co-residents access to even more basic human rights.

Israel today is an exclusivist state in which Arabs make up twenty percent of Israel and forty percent of Israel/Palestine, yet they hold only seven percent of the seats in the Israeli Knesset or Parliament (Burge 138). Palestinians daily experience discrimination, unjust confiscation of land, water restrictions, destruction of entire villages, demolition of homes, arrests and torture, closures, and more (Burge 136-155).

According to a 2004 report by Amnesty International entitled, “Under the rubble: House demolition and destruction of land and property,” over 3,000 homes and large amounts of agricultural land and property were destroyed by the Israeli army and security forces in the previous three years and it only continues to worsen. Thousands of families are displaced overnight. Often, the demolitions are carried out without warning in the middle of the night. Residents don’t even have time to remove their belongings. The victims of these demolitions, whether in Israel or the “occupied territories” are almost exclusively Arabs. Jews are never touched. The reasons the army gives for these demolitions are “military/security needs” or lack of permits (“Under the Rubble”). However, it is well-known that the true motivation is the gradual takeover of Arab land in order to make Israel an exclusively Jewish state.
Access to water is one of the more extreme problems many Palestinians in the occupied territories face today. All of the region’s water supplies are controlled by the Israeli government. The average consumption of water in the Occupied Territories per person is 70 liters a day. According to the World Health Organization, the recommended amount is 100 liters. This is striking considering the average consumption in Israel is about 300 liters, or four times as much. "Israel uses more than 80 per cent of the water from the Mountain Aquifer, the only source of underground water in the OPT, as well as all of the surface water available from the Jordan River of which Palestinians are denied any share" ("Troubled Waters" 3). Many Palestinians have absolutely no access to running water and rationing is commonplace. Any access to water they have is difficult to obtain and expensive and some families spend up to a quarter of their income on water ("Troubled Waters" 3).

Treatment such as this would have been unheard of in Biblical Israel. If Christians and Jews claim to hold the land on Biblical grounds, then they must act in a Biblical manner toward all of the residents.

We must now take a look at the measures Christian Zionists are taking in order to bring about the characteristics of Israel and the end times as they believe they were prophesied. According to Stephen Sizer, an activist and writer against Christian Zionism and Chairman of the International Bible Society of the United Kingdom, there are six major political implications of the fundamental beliefs held by Christian Zionists (Sizer back cover). First, the belief that ethnic Jews remain the chosen people of God leads to blessing the current state of Israel in material ways (Sizer 252). Unfortunately, this all too often is manifested in supporting Israel’s policies unconditionally and lobbying the American government to do the same.
Second, the belief that the Jews must be returned to the promised land before the end times leads Christian Zionists to facilitate “aliyah” or the return of Jews to Israel through Christian organizations and the Jewish Agency (Sizer 252). The first Christian Zionist agency to actively pursue “aliyah” was *Exodus* founded in 1984. If a person can prove he or she is a Jew, the Israeli government grants them automatic citizenship (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Therefore, all *Exodus* had to do was “locate Jews, persuade them to emigrate, help them obtain documents to prove their Jewish origins, distribute humanitarian packages and pay for exit permits, passports, debt repayment, transport and accommodation” (Sizer 222). Once the Jews reached Israel, other Christian Organizations such as the *International Christian Embassy of Jerusalem* and *Bridges for Peace* would help the émigrés with resettlement costs, food, medical and living expenses (Sizer 222). Since 1991, they have helped over 80,000 people immigrate to Israel from the former Soviet Union (Sizer 220).

Third, “Eretz Israel” or greater Israel as described in scripture must be exclusively Jewish land. Therefore, Zionists push for illegal settlements in the Palestinian territories and the gradual expulsion of all non-Jews (Sizer 252). Christian Zionist organizations such as the *International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem* support programs in which they provide financial aid and even bullet-proof vests for Israeli settlers into the West Bank and Gaza (Sizer 229).

Fourth, Jerusalem is believed to be the exclusive capital of Israel rather than Tel Aviv, though it is currently shared with the Palestinians. Consequently, Western governments are pressured to move their embassies to Jerusalem and, thereby, recognize it as Israel’s capital (Sizer 252). Many influential leaders in America have lobbied and supported this move. Senator Bob Dole said in 1999, “Jerusalem is today… and should remain forever, the eternal and
undivided capital of the State of Israel...The time has come...to move beyond letters, expressions of support, and sense of the Congress resolutions. The time has come to enact legislation that will get the job done” (Sizer 232).

Fifth, Christian Zionists believe that the third temple must be rebuilt, priests must be consecrated and sacrifices reinstituted (Sizer 252). This is made especially complicated since the location of the temple is most commonly believed to be where the Muslim Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa Mosque, ranking third in the holiest sites in Islam, currently stand. Various Jewish organizations, some with direct links to prominent Christian Zionist organizations, have been implicated in attempts to destroy the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa (Sizer 234). “Between 1967 and 1990 there were over 100 armed assaults on the Haram Al-Sharif by Jewish militants, often led by rabbis.” Never has an Israeli Prime Minister or a chief rabbi criticized these assaults (Sizer 236). The Old Testament book of Numbers verse 19:2 states that the ashes of an unblemished red heifer must be mixed with water blessed by a priest and sprinkled on the temple furniture in order to make it clean (Sizer 237). In 1997 a Pentecostal Mississippi rancher founded an organization with the purpose of raising livestock for temple sacrifice. In 1997, the first pure red heifer was born after 2,000 years (Sizer 238).

Finally, sixth, the belief that the Apocalypse and Armageddon are imminent leads to no real desire for peace among Christian Zionists. In fact, to them, compromising with or helping the Palestinians in any way would be considered aligning oneself with the enemy and against God in the battle of the end of times which is forthcoming (Sizer 252).

All of these actions demonstrate the deep beliefs and determination of Christian Zionists. But are their beliefs correct? Most theological differences of opinion do not have great
consequences in the socio-political world. A difference of opinion regarding predestination, for example, does not lead to the destruction of a nation or the genocide of a people. The theology of Christian Zionism, however, does have a very real impact that affects thousands of people, many of whom are Christians. It is for this reason that all Christians have a responsibility to research and decide for themselves what their stance is on the issue of Christian Zionism and to take a stand one way or the other. If the theology is wrong, the consequences are tremendous.
Bibliography


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